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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

From squalid realism on the one hand, from nebulous aestheticism on the other, *These Times* is happily free, and if Mr. Untermeyer pursues the path he has so fearlessly chosen, we need not doubt that his next book will be a still further advance. Amy Lowell

SONG AND PROPAGANDA

Roads and What is Your Legion? By Grace Fallow Norton.
Houghton Mifflin Co.

Among the poems in the first of these volumes one comes on strange and fragrant verse like this:

If my mother knew
How our doves at dawn
Shake me with their wings,
Wild, bewildered, wan,
When the white star sings,
And they would be gone.

One poem especially, *In a Green Place*, makes an intriguing pattern:

In a green place,
A vine-twined green place,
Where I wished to lie sweetly dreaming and sleeping,
Where I wished to wake laughing and leaping,
In a green place,
A tree-guarded green place,
I saw a little girl in a black dress weeping.

A number of other poems too one must credit with a richness of sound, alluring like some glamorous fabric on a bargain counter. To read the whole volume, however, is to be surfeited with windiness of thought, phrase and rhythm; with a kind of "gladness," coarsely sentimental in

Song and Propaganda

texture. It seems a pity that more writers have not the instinct to publish only the piquant fragments of their work; their art then might at least appear to be more complete.

What Is Your Legion? is propaganda rather than poetry—written before this country had entered the war, to rouse America from its indifference. It rings with sentiments usually called “fine” or “noble,” the way a busy street-car rings with its fares. It testifies, I think, to the elusiveness of the arts, to the futility of trying to mobilize them or volunteer their service for any unintrinsic purpose.

In this, to veer slightly from Miss Norton, in whose work at least shines the zeal of the volunteer, there is a moral for societies like the Vigilantes who would offer their goddess to war as a kind of advertising girl. Very swiftly she evades them, and leaves them to perpetrate atrocities alone—paintings that shriek through an acre of brazen paint and impotent line for men to go to war, and poems too often empty and blatant.

Work like this they should leave frankly to the commercial craftsman, realizing that no fine art will ever result because some artist has “come across” or been drafted in; that the great poem, for example, will speak of war only because the poet has wanted to, having loved or hated it, or caught some passionate glimpse of it; and that perhaps he will not speak of it at all. Abandoning the idea of a liaison between art and war, such a society could then turn rather toward making possible the integrity of the artist in time of war. Conservation being the fashion, should it not

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extend beyond material food—if we believe that, when peace comes, men cannot live by bread alone?

Or, would this be an impractical and over-provident measure—the policy of the idealist? Doubtless there is no wind so evil as to blow nobody good. In the war-ridden countries, one hears, already the ceremony of marriage is becoming somewhat irrelevant. This perhaps is the glorious day of the prostitute—in art as well as in life. Admitting this possibility, at least one enjoys a glimmer of the truth and its attendant freedom.

Dorothy Dudley

CORRESPONDENCE

ABOUT EMERSON

Dear POETRY: There are many who, like myself, have liked your editorials in POETRY and who agree with your attitude towards the artificial and stilted style of certain academic verse. But your remarks on Emerson in the September number, while extremely novel, do not impress us as quite just to the ideas of the great sage.

During a twenty years' exploration of his *Templa Serena* I have found that before his essays were published they were trimmed and shorn—made safe for New-England democracy. "I mixed them with a little Boston water, so they would sell in New York and London:" these are his own words. And if the *English Traits* were re-written according to Emerson's true opinion as expressed in his journals, what splendid shadows would offset the present high lights